

Message Text

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TAGS: MILL, MARR, CA

SUBJ: TRUDEAU COMMONS STATEMENT ON CUBAN AIRCRAFT AT GANDER

REF: OTTAWA 0280

1. FOLLOWING EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE FEBRUARY 5 COMMONS QUESTION PERIOD:

2. BEGIN QUOTE: MR. PERRIN BEATTY (WELLINGTON-GREY-DUFFERIN-WATERLOO): MR. SPEAKER, I HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE PRIME MINISTER WHICH RELATES TO THE LANDING OF TWO CUBAN AIRCRAFT AT GANDER ON JANUARY 13 AND 14. WAS THE PRIME MINISTER INFORMED, PRIOR TO HIS TRIP TO CUBA, OF THE LANDING OF THESE TWO CUBAN PLANES AT GANDER, ONE OF WHICH WAS GOING TO GUINEA BISSAU AND ONE OF WHICH WAS RETURNING FROM BRAZZAVILLE, AND DID HE ORDER AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER THE PLANES WERE CONNECTED WITH THE CUBAN WAR EFFORT IN ANGOLA?

3. RIGHT HON. P.E. TRUDEAU (PRIME MINISTER): THE GENERAL ANSWER, MR. SPEAKER, IS YES. I WOULD NOT SAY I HEARD ABOUT THESE TWO SPECIFIC PLANES BECAUSE AT THE TIME THE INFORMATION WAS NOT THAT PRECISE, BUT I DID DISCUSS WITH MY OFFICIALS THE POSSIBILITY OF CUBA USING GANDER, AS IT HAS FOR QUITE A FEW YEARS SINCE IT COULD NOT HAVE LANDING RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES, FOR

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ONE THING, IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WERE RELATED TO THE

ANGOLAN WAR. WE MADE CLEAR TO CUBAN OFFICIALS, THE AMBASSADOR TO BE PRECISE, THAT IF WE HAD ANY CAUSE TO SUSPECT SUCH FLIGHTS WERE TAKING PLACE OR WOULD TAKE PLACE WE WOULD EXERCISE OUR RIGHTS UNDER ICAO TO SEARCH THOSE PLANES TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY ARE USED FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES.

4. SO THE ANSWER IS YES, BUT I CANNOT SAY THAT I KNEW WITH PRECISION AT THE TIME WHAT PLANE AT WHAT TIME HAD ACTUALLY FLOWN.

5. MR. BEATTY: A SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION. MAY I ASK THE PRIME MINISTER WHETHER HE HAD GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE, PRIOR TO GOING TO CUBA, THAT IN FACT BUAN PLANES, WHICH WERE BEING USED TO FUEL THE WAR EFFORT IN ANGOLA, HAD LANDED AT GANDER? HE INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THESE TWO AIRCRAFT. DID HE HAVE GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE, PRIOR FOR LEAVING FOR CUBA, THAT CUBAN PLANES HAD BEEN USING GANDER AIRPORT IN CONNECTION WITH THE WAR EFFORT IN ANGOLA?

6. MR. TRUDEAU: MR. SPEAKER, FOR THE QUESTION TO BECOME RELEVANT THE PLANES HAD TO LAND AND TAKE OFF. ONE OR TWO PLANES HAVE LANDED AND TAKEN OFF AND OUR OFFICIALS WERE ALERT ENOUGH TO DRAW THE MATTER TO MY ATTENTION, AT WHICH TIME I INDICATED, IN AGREEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, THAT THE CUBANS SHOULD BE NOTIFIED THAT ALREADY TWO PLANES HAD COME AND GONE AND WE DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS ON THEM OR EXACTLY WHAT THEY WERE DOING, BUT FROM NOW ON THEY SHOULD BE ALERTED TO THE FACT THAT WE WOULD BE WATCHING FUTURE LANDINGS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SEARCHING, IF WE FELT IT WAS WARRANTED, OR IF THE DESTINATION WAS SUCH AS TO MAKE US BELIEVE IT WAS FOR ASSISTANCE TO ANGOLA, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY. I WOULD HAVE TO CHECK THE FACTS, BUT I BELIEVE AS A RESULT OF THAT, WHAT HAS HAPPENED HAS BEEN THAT IN FACT THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER UNSCHEDULED FLIGHTS OF CUBAN PLANES FOR DESTINATION FOR OR FROM AFRICA.

END QUOTE.
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